

**Directorate of Intelligence  
Office of African and Latin American Analysis**

11 March 1985

NOTE FOR: Deputy Director for Intelligence

Last week Fred Wettering sent a memorandum to the DCI suggesting that there were some similarities between the Cuban "withdrawal" from Angola in 1976 and recent statements by Havana regarding Nicaragua. He also tasked ALA to prepare a short paper on the question.

Attached is the memorandum ALA prepared for the Director and a covering note for your signature. Copies of the memorandum will also be sent to the NIO for Africa and the NIO for Latin America.

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Acting Director

Attachment:  
As stated



Central Intelligence Agency  
Office of the Deputy Director for Intelligence

NOTE FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

Last week Fred Wettering suggested that the Cuban "withdrawal" from Angola in 1976 be examined to see if there were any parallels to Havana's recent statements regarding Nicaragua. In his memorandum to you of 6 March he noted that ALA had been tasked to do a short paper on that question. Attached for your information is the ALA response.

Robert M. Gates  
Deputy Director for Intelligence

Attachment:  
As stated

**Directorate of Intelligence  
Office of African and Latin American Analysis**

11 March 1985

NOTE FOR: NIO for Latin America

*Bob*

The attached memorandum was prepared by ALA in response to Fred Wettering's memorandum to the DCI suggesting that there were some similarities between the Cuban withdrawal from Angola in 1976 and recent statements by Havana 25X1 regarding Nicaragua.

  
Acting Director

Attachment:  
As stated

**Directorate of Intelligence  
Office of African and Latin American Analysis**

11 March 1985

NOTE FOR: NIO for Africa

*Fred*

The attached memorandum is being sent to the DCI in response to your suggestion of some similarities between the Cuban "withdrawal" from Angola in 1976 and recent statements by Havana regarding Nicaragua.



Acting Director

Attachment:  
As stated

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Central Intelligence Agency

Washington, D.C. 20505  
8 March 1985

## Cuban Military Personnel Withdrawal Offer

Summary

Havana's current rhetoric about a withdrawal of Cuban military personnel from Nicaragua is, in our opinion, primarily a propaganda ploy intended to support Nicaragua's efforts to generate diplomatic and domestic pressure on the Reagan administration. The Castro regime's pledge to recall 100 Cuban military personnel beginning in May [redacted] 25X1

[redacted] is reminiscent of the statements emanating from Havana in the spring of 1976 when the Cuban troop presence in Angola had peaked at 36,000. [redacted] 25X1

From a Cuban perspective, the situation in early 1976 was fortuitous. A review of interagency publications covering the period show that the short term military threat to the MPLA was down and the government in Luanda appeared secure. Given this favorable military situation, Castro could shift his attention to turning around the unfavorable world opinion that Cuban involvement in Angola had generated. Because the legislative process that resulted in the Javits-Tunney Amendment and the Clark Amendment was completed several months earlier (December 1975-January 1976), we have found no evidence that the Cubans were using promises of withdrawal to influence the legislative process. Indeed, the Cuban build-up was still underway during the enactment of these two amendments. It seems instead that the lesson of these events is that the Cubans will undertake temporary troop withdrawals to deflect international criticism only when the battlefield situation permits. Such a condition did not exist in December 1975-January 1976, but clearly did occur several months later. [redacted] 25X1

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This memorandum is for the DCI. It was prepared by [redacted] Office of African and Latin American Analysis. Comments and queries are welcome and should be addressed to Chief, Middle America-Caribbean Division, [redacted]

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By early 1976, Cuban involvement in Angola entered a new phase. Not only had the anti-MPLA forces reverted back to guerrilla tactics but international criticism of Castro's adventurism was mounting. With the battlefield relatively secure, Castro in the Spring of 1976 began a campaign to ease Western concerns.

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Apparently in early May 1976,

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Cuban withdrawal had begun and that by the end of 1977 an advisory group of about 200 Cubans would remain.

We now know [redacted] that, beginning probably in late March or early April 1976, some of the Cuban troops that had been rushed to Angola in early November 1975 to prevent Agostinho Neto's MPLA from being overrun were being sent home. Their presence in Angola seemed no longer

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necessary once the crisis precipitated by the invading South African and Zairian troops was over. Their return in the Spring gave Castro the opportunity to deflect international criticism of Cuba's aggressive role in Africa. [redacted]

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By late May, however, it was becoming apparent that the anti-MPLA forces were shifting to a long-term guerrilla strategy and Havana began to shift its tactics. For example, Cuban President Dorticos told the press that Cuba's word for the pullout must be accepted at face value and said the US would make a mistake by demanding evidence of the withdrawal. He was quoted as saying "we shall continue to aid and support all liberation movements and shall never repent or change our attitude." At a ceremony on 6 June honoring Interior Ministry personnel (on hand were over 100 Special Troops sent home from Angola), Fidel Castro stressed the gradual nature of the pullout and described the timetable for withdrawal as "the time strictly necessary to support the Angolan people's defense against any foreign aggression while the Angolan People's Army is organized, trained, and equipped." [redacted]

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While Castro was using the issue of withdrawal to its best advantage, there appears to have been no attempt to influence US legislation. In fact, the US Senate and House voted on covert aid funding to anti-MPLA forces on 19 December 1975 and 27 January 1976, respectively--months before Castro first raised the issue of a limited troop pullback. This is not to say that Havana wouldn't have played this card if it was available. Indeed, there is ample precedent in other areas of the Cuba-US relationship to link Cuban propaganda maneuvers to Congressional activity. In August 1982, for example, Havana used a very powerful transmitter to broadcast for several hours in the evening on a Radio Marti-related frequency just a few days before Congress was scheduled to consider Radio Marti legislation. The transmission was clearly designed to remind US legislators--as well as commercial broadcasting executives worried about Cuban retaliation--what Cuba could do to retaliate in the event Radio Marti began broadcasts to Cuba. The Castro regime also sent pamphlets on Jose Marti to selected legislators, describing Marti's alleged hostility toward the US and implying that the use of his name for the radio bordered on sacrilege. [redacted]

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Given past experience, we see no reason to treat Cuban pledges of an intention to withdraw some personnel from Nicaragua as anything other than a propaganda maneuver. Castro has made pledges in the past that he has abrogated on whim, justifying his shifts by claiming that circumstances had changed (as in Angola subsequent to the April-June pledges) or that the other party involved in the matter had not kept its part of the bargain (his excuse in 1981 for training Colombian guerrillas after pledging not to interfere in Colombia's internal affairs). Neither do we see evidence that he has changed his traditional stance against verification. He may well pull out a token group with appropriate press coverage, but we doubt he will permit a [redacted]

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mechanism to monitor whether he is covertly increasing the Cuban military presence. Moreover, he will quickly jettison concerns over public relations if the threat posed by the Contras places the survival of the Sandinista regime at risk. [redacted]

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**SUBJECT: Cuban Military Personnel Withdrawal Offer**

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ALA/MC/CU/ [redacted] (8 March 1985)

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